

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University
Ohio State Engineer

Title: The Bookshelf Speaks

Issue Date: Mar-1925

Publisher: Ohio State University, College of Engineering

Citation: Ohio State Engineer, vol. 8, no. 3 (March, 1925), 16-17.

URI: <http://hdl.handle.net/1811/33682>

Appears in Collections: [Ohio State Engineer: Volume 8, no. 3 \(March, 1925\)](#)



WE hasten to acclaim, along with thousands of other book reviewers all over the country, "The Little French Girl" by Anne Douglas Sedgwick, as a fine piece of writing. The first fifty pages are the hardest and after the real story is started it's the kind you miss two or three miles over, just "finishing this chapter." The style is easy to read and while not sensational is full of richness. The freedom from deliberate effort toward style reminds one of the simplicity of Conrad although perhaps lacking his penetration. We thought Miss Sedgwick endowed her characters with too much intuition. Easily taken for granted in Alix and Guile, we wondered when Toppie, Maman, Andre and all the rest exhibited it too. But perhaps that's French. At any rate Toppie summed it up rather well when she said, "You see things more clearly than most people, Alix." Her naivete quite won her way into the hearts and confidences of the English family she visited and you won't know till the last ten pages of the book what else of England she took for her very own.

There is even more to "The Little French Girl" than a good story. It is an excellent contrast between the French and English attitudes toward love and marriage. We in this country who are inclined to think of France as the land of romance and dashing lovers are a bit surprised to find the great amount of reserve and convention preserved in the average French family over a question of marriage. Everything must be "suitable."

The sedate Englishman whom we picture upholding his venerable family traditions against anything, we find willing to make any sacrifice for true love. These pictures are well drawn and the story is fascinating. Need we add that for the last two months it has held first place in the Bookman's monthly score?

"The Green Hat," by Michael Arlen, is another very much talked of book that came to our attention recently. It's just bubbling over with the kind of style that people like to call charm. It strikes you from the first page. Arlen has the knack of echoing phrases, of tacking on to the end of a paragraph or chapter a repeated phrase that somehow takes on a keener meaning the second time. The effect is, well, it is charming. Another characteristic of Arlen's style that might be troublesome at first is his habit of introducing little parenthetical thoughts. One sentence begins—another bubbles over into the middle of it—and the first continues. We thought we found, too, in the opening chapters a deliberate attempt to be naughty. It does pay nowadays, but for one who can write as well as Arlen does the effort is shamefully wasted. He soon forgets the effort, however, and settles down to write his story in his very fascinating way. Besides, it is a pleasure to find a book that leaves you in no doubt as to how it got its title. You see it was her green hat that he saw first, "such a hat as popular young girls affect *pour le sport*. . ."

I like to think of Conrad as the bread and butter of a literary diet, never sensational but always immensely satisfying. "Victory" struck me that way. Conrad must have been in a good humor when he wrote "Victory." He has no bone to pick, no cult to satisfy, no

congregation to preach to,—just a good story to tell. Realistic? I have a friend who swears that Conrad's description of the fire made him smell smoke, the illusion being so perfect that he searched all over his house to see if there really was any fire. It's a good story, full of lonely islands, mystery, and an odd romance.

Percy Marks' recent advent to our campus more or less forces some statement of what we thought of his "Plastic Age" and his estimate of the American Undergraduate. Marks translates Caesar's "came, saw and conquered" into "drop in, squint at and squelch." His "Plastic Age" we like to think of as an excellent compendium of American college slang, date 1924. Perhaps it's nicer if we don't say anything more about "The Plastic Age."

Marks lectures very much as he writes, albeit rather loosely, rather daringly, and with an abundance of clever sarcasm. In his satirization of the American Undergraduate he took a few of the conclusions of every bull session (thank goodness we can use this term in the presence of women now, Percy did), dressed them up in dramatic form and possessed enough nerve to ladle them out to an undergraduate mob which he knew was going to have a chance to ask him questions after it was all over. Now that's a pretty good sized job. About once a century we find a man who can do it and get away with it. Marks did. We object, however, to any implication of originality in discovering these silly asinities. We congratulate Marks, the orator.

It was an entire accident that we ever obtained a little book of verses called "Something Else Again" by Franklin P. Adams. You see, someone took it out of the library and lost it; someone else found it and gave it to another fellow who loaned it to me—and I may take it back to the library. Franklin P. Adams (it sounds better in full) is very widely and, in general, well known as the columnist of The Conning Tower in the *New York Tribune*. He is the kind of man who can select random lines from Horace—Horace mind you—and weave about them catchy little poems in the American language; the kind of man who, remembering his Horace even while in the A. E. F., thoughtfully tries out one of Horace's favorite and often referred to wines and remembers to wonder candidly how in hell Horace ever wrote about it. It's a cheerful thing to pick up for a few minutes' relaxation. Call number EL140.A212, So.

Two small volumes were brought to my attention recently that should be of particular interest to engineers. They are "Daedalus, or Science and the Future," by one J. B. S. Haldane, and the reply to it, "Icarus, or The Future of Science," by Bertrand Russell. The first is a fascinating and very startling group of predictions as to where we're going with all this scientific research. Mr. Haldane draws a picture of things fifty or a hundred years hence which, if not accurate, is at least vastly stimulating to the imagination. Mr. Haldane is a scholar of biochemistry at Cambridge University, Eng-

land, and so is rather well qualified to point out just where this massive machinery of science seems to be headed.

Icarus, the reply to the first volume, considers seriously the possibility that scientific advance may not necessarily be a boon to mankind. If improved scientific murder methods make war impossible as many have said, is it not consequent that the government holding the balance of scientific power may, without the necessity of complete extermination, take over all the rest? Does not this lead to a unification of the world under one rule and that probably militaristic? Is the engineer's research then to lead to its own destruction?

Such ideas are tremendously alarming and the chief value of these little books is the sharp stimulus with which they send our thoughts off in entirely new channels. It is pertinent to refer here to an editorial entitled "Progress," which appeared in the January issue of THE OHIO STATE ENGINEER, and which deals again with this mooted question of "what are we coming to and what is it all about?"

We were much impressed by the motion picture, "He Who Gets Slapped." Lon Chaney in the title role has added another star to his crown and deserves to be called the peer of all our actors of the silent drama. The picture is apt to be misunderstood and disliked by many entertainment seekers because it strikes too deep. The original by Andreyev was written as a play and so the scenario follows it very accurately. It is pierced throughout by a poignancy and touching irony that is intensely fascinating.

To other voices already raised let us add ours in protest against the auditorium and stage facilities at Ohio State University. Strollers this year with a most highly commendable production had to apologize because the curtain broke. What irony in that! To go before a University audience and have to say, "We're sorry. There is no curtain on this stage and the temporary makeshift which we rented has broken!" Percy Marks (200 stood to hear him) said, "The State University is the department store of education." Let's NOT make it a five-and-ten cent store! *We want an adequate auditorium!*

CHEMICAL ENGINEERING

The students of chemical engineering have organized a student branch of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers and have been granted a charter by the senior organization. Dr. Jas. R. Wethrow has been appointed councillor.

At one of the early meetings the following officers were elected: Arthur E. Jones, President; Ralph J. Pad-dock, Vice-President; Willard De Bruin, Secretary; W. Fred Underwood, Treasurer.

A constitution has been adopted which provides that all students in chemical engineering who have completed their freshman year and two quarters of their sophomore year shall be eligible to membership.

Several meetings have been held at which great enthusiasm has been shown. Debates and open forum meetings have been planned for the future. At the next meeting Dr. E. E. Fritz, of the Department of Chemical Engineering, will discuss the relation of rubber to chemical engineering. This will be followed by discussion by the members of the society.

Dr. H. E. Fritz is to leave the staff of the Chemical Engineering Department on March 1st. He has accepted a position as sales engineer with B. F. Goodrich Rubber Co. at Akron, Ohio.

ARCHITECTS

The inmates of the Senior drafting room are the proud possessors of a new lead-lined bird-bath, ostensibly installed for the purpose of soaking stretches. A new lavatory has also been installed, to encourage cleanliness among the upper classmen.

At the last meeting of the Architects' Club, a talk upon stained glass by Mr. Reiser, of the Von Gerichon Art Glass Co., provided much interest. A series of similar talks by different men are planned for the future meetings this year.